

## Feature phones provide learners with secondary education beyond the school gates



**This case study showcases how, with HDIF's support, Shule Direct is reaching Qualifying Test students with educational content via its Makini SMS initiative.**

HDIF Case Study  
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## Introduction

Shule Direct is a not-for-profit social enterprise that provides local, relevant, digital study platforms for learners in Tanzania and across Africa. Shule Direct works with qualified teachers to create digitised learning notes, tutorials, quizzes and multimedia content; and develop technological solutions to deliver a multi-subject comprehensive secondary school curriculum to students across the country.

Makini SMS is an SMS feature-phone-based product developed by Shule Direct in collaboration with Eneza Education of Kenya and Tigo Telecommunications in Tanzania to deliver multiple-choice quizzes, short lessons and an ask-a-teacher service for Secondary School students in Tanzania.

## The innovation opportunity

In Tanzania, the Secondary School certificate is the key to higher education as well as job opportunities. Yet almost 70 per cent of Tanzanians do not attend school beyond Primary. The Qualifying Tests presents a second chance for them to complete their secondary education beyond the school gates. QT students are not formal students. They do not have a school to go to, a schedule to follow or a uniform to wear. They are independent learners with competing priorities, juggling many responsibilities.

The Makini quizzes can be accessed on mobile phones, meaning students can engage with academic content, revise and improve their performance any time, any where. In place of a real teacher in a school, 'Ticha Kidevu' is a character who becomes the go-to source for quick lessons and guidance to the right content.

## The innovation

Shule Direct's task was to bridge the learning resources gap by delivering an affordable and convenient solution for all users. As content developers, we are required to be innovative, focusing on the Principles for Digital Development<sup>1</sup> including 'Design with the user' to cater for demands. Makini quizzes that form part of the educational content repository add so much value to the learning notes because they allow users to test themselves and receive instant feedback as they are studying on their own.

## The challenge

Integrating technology has many facets that are all needed to improve its development prospects for education and learning. Access to the digital world is the first frontier to get through before we get to think of what people should be learning.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://digitalprinciples.org>

Makini quizzes provide a revision platform, which highly compliments other resources on Shule Direct platforms, revision is a practical way to assess understanding of the subject matter and prepare students for exams. On Shule Direct, learners are able to access updated syllabus, curriculums, learning notes, 3D Science diagrams, watch multimedia videos, and engage on the discussion forum. However, the quizzes provide an avenue of individualized learning and individual testing for students at own pace with instant feedback. Ability to get instant feedback has a gamified element which sparks a students' interest to attempt more quizzes and therefore to keep learning and revising the subject matter.

## Learning

**Learning from technology is just not efficient but proves to be cost effective.** The entire offline Secondary School Curriculum, which also includes over 90,000 Makini SMS quizzes, can be accessed at less than a US dollar per student compared to the \$162 US per student required to purchase the minimum number of textbooks. These students not only accessed locally relevant curriculum but also acquired digital skills, soft skills such as curiosity and collaboration, life skills including financial literacy and a better shot at being content creators, rather than just content consumers.

*Students are not only accessing locally relevant curriculum to be able to do well in their exams but they acquiring digital skills.*

**Partnerships play a great role in innovation.** They fulfill objectives in mutually beneficial ways where it is a win-win for all involved – from the practitioners to the community. It is important to leverage partners' strength and continue to deliver together. Diversity means nothing if it is not inclusive. Shule Direct seeks to continue building meaningful relationships that not only strengthens the ecosystem by providing best practices on mechanisms of collaborations but addressing challenges in education and learning holistically, through different partners.